



Department of Justice

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FLORIDA MAN SENTENCED TO 63 MONTH PRISON TERM IN COUNTERFEITING SCHEME THAT TARGETED RETAILERS NATIONWIDE

DAYTON – Arthur L. Vanwinkle, age 39, of Bradenton, Florida, was sentenced Thursday in United States District Court in Dayton to 63 months in federal prison for possession and use of unauthorized access devices in a massive scheme to steal large ticket merchandise from retail stores located throughout Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Ohio. Vanwinkle led and organized a conspiracy of individuals, who switched Unit Pricing Code (UPC) labels on expensive merchandise, to include vacuum cleaners, power tools, welding units, and other home appliances sold at various Lowe's, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, Meijer and other retail locations throughout the eastern seaboard.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, and Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cincinnati Field Division, announced the sentence which was handed down yesterday by United States District Judge Walter H. Rice.

Vanwinkle had previously pled guilty to these charges on August 8, 2007. A UPC label is considered an "access device" under federal law.

Between December 2003 and November 2005, Vanwinkle, together with his wife, Donna, stepson, Jason Roberts, and others, executed a sophisticated scheme to produce fake UPC labels for inexpensive merchandise. After entering victim stores, they would place these bogus UPC labels over actual store UPC pricing labels appearing on much higher-priced items. This allowed them to purchase merchandise at prices far below the actual retail price. The conspirators would then resell the stolen property through internet sales on E-Bay and at local pawn shops. In addition, they would return merchandise to other victim stores after they had removed the false UPC labels, receiving either full cash refunds or merchandise debit cards.

Vanwinkle, together with two of his co-conspirators, were arrested in Trotwood on November 11, 2005 while attempting to steal merchandise from a Lowe's store. Donna Vanwinkle and her son, Jason Roberts, each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to use counterfeit access devices. Each was sentenced to three years probation and 100 hours of community service for their role in the fraudulent scheme. Roberts is serving the first six months of his probation on home confinement. Vanwinkle, his wife and Roberts were ordered to jointly pay restitution totaling \$151,516 to the various retailers.

"White collar criminals such as these cause each of us to pay higher retail prices in order to offset the costs of their crimes," Lockhart said. "Nonviolent property crimes are in many ways as corrosive to society as violent street crime."

Lockhart also commended the efforts of the FBI for their investigation into this matter, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dwight Keller who prosecuted the cases.

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